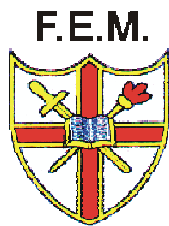


# Sounding the Trumpet

January - March 2013



# The True Identity of Bethlehem's Babe

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:8-12).

Most people are very familiar with the Christmas story, but do they truly understand who the shepherds found lying in the manger really was and is? The majority of Christmas cards miserably fail to reveal that the child was more than Mary's offspring. Maybe all the carols, glitter and gift-giving obscures the fact that this babe is God's Son, the Saviour of mankind. A neat trick the devil has pulled off indeed! The fact is though, God stepped out of Heaven to spend time with us in Person. The angels on the day of Christ's birth could not but rejoice at this marvellous, once for all eternity, event. They looked up to see God on the Throne, and down to see Him in a cattle shed. It is almost too much for our minds to grasp. But no matter how people think Christmas should be celebrated, or even if it ought to be, that night that Jesus was born was the revelation of God in human form. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:1-2, 14). Let us look at the three things the angels called Jesus.

## **Saviour**

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). This verse tells us exactly whom Jesus came to save. It was not the religious or self-righteous people, who by-and-large reject their need for a Saviour. He came instead to set the sinner free. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). He came to deliver the hopeless, the helpless and those who no one else wanted. “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17).

Jesus is our Saviour today just as much as He was for the shepherds who first peered into the stable that night. They knew that God had given them the marvellous privilege of standing before the Saviour of the world. Such a blessing is available to each one of us in this era too, for through Him we know that we are accepted by God. “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). A part of being our Saviour is the fact He delivers us from the power of sin, therefore it has no more authority over those who believe. “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5) ... “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with

the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). This Saviour preserves those who follow, trust and obey Him. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). As we continue in faith, so He keeps us secure in Christ. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5) ... "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1 John 2:24).

### **Christ**

We wonder if the shepherds fully understood that they were standing in the very presence of Almighty God that night. We do not need a physical location to be with God, all that is required is faith that He now permits us to approach Him. Do we truly appreciate the significance of Hebrews 4:16, which tells us that we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"? Has it dawned on us yet that we have free access to God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, at any time? This is not on our terms or according to our own merit, instead it was made available from the very moment the Lord came to earth. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Christ, the Messiah, is our High Priest, this means that we can simply ask in faith, believing that God hears our prayers and will act according to His will. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23). It is a wonderful blessing to know that Christ intercedes for all who trust Him, so since we are in Him, He will represent us before the throne of glory. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25) ... "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

### **Lord**

The angel recognised the Lordship of the baby in the manger and encouraged the shepherds to believe the same. What appeared to be a helpless babe was in fact the Sovereign Lord of all. Revelation 1:8 records Jesus saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty". Here is a reminder to each of us that Jesus must be Lord of all or not at all in our lives. "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:16) ... "He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). "Lord" is an appropriate title for our Saviour, but have we ever truly made Him Lord? That is, have we allowed Him to take absolute and complete authority over our lives? Simply calling Him Lord with the mouth without faith that expresses itself in action is a deception. If He is our Lord, then He deserves our all. We must be willing to lay everything down as an offering. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). Is such a demand for total obedience too costly

for us? The shepherds were some of the first to see the Lord, but no matter what walk of life we come from, He must be our Master if we are to enter into His Kingdom. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

"Saviour ... Christ ... Lord" is what the angel said was the true identity of Bethlehem's babe. That child born in a stable over 2,000 years ago offered all who believe a life-changing experience. Sadly few today see the true significance for why He came. They ignore the fact that this little child was the one who would die on the cross for sinners, therefore He cannot be their Christ until they make Him their Lord. The greatest gift of all was given to us on the first Christmas Day. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

**G. J. Hall**

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## Standing Tall in the Field of Faith

Are you looking after your lentils?

"And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentils: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory" (2 Samuel 23:11-12).

There are lots more to this lesser known incident than simply a field of fifteen-inch high lentil leguminous bushy plants. It concerns a field worth fighting for and a gift worth defending.

### **Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite**

We know he was brave follower of David and a defender of the land of promise. The focus here is on a field of crops divided part barley and part lentil. Is the field worth fighting over? Shammah the son of Agee certainly believed it was. This parcel of land was precious to him and the folk of the community. It was their land and the source of their food. Apparently they enjoyed nutritious lentil soup. Food and faith are part of the balanced recipe of the people living obediently by serving the God of Israel faithfully and courageously.

### **Strength and greed of the enemies of Israel**

Let us look at the makeup of the Philistines. The Bible paints them as the Kingdom of Israel's most dangerous enemy. They were a warlike fighting people who brewed strong drink and enjoyed having wild parties. Goliath was their massive champion and Dagon was one of their hand made gods.

### **Selective field full of lentils**

Lentils - or barley, as it is (1 Samuel 11:13), might grow in separate parts of the same field. This fact is revealed in 1 Samuel 11:12, it is implied that Eleazar might fight in that part where the barley was and Shammah where the lentils were. Both were servants of the Lord of Israel and brave men of faith.

### **Scattering of some of the people**

Of course many people in the local neighbourhood were not as brave, their hearts were filled with fear and that fear made them run and abandon all that was theirs by right. Faith however gives one strength to stand his ground, to fight and defend his possessions especially that which has been given as a gift from the God of Heaven. The very ground they had cultivated and cared for, the entire land of Israel was such a heavenly gift. It was indeed the land of promise, the land of prophesy and the land of purpose. It remains an important area on the atlas of the Almighty. The field of lentils one day would hear the language of heavenly love and the lasting gift of forgiveness from the one they called the Nazarene; the barley fields would hear the message of the beatitudes and Bartimaeus the blind man. Whilst the fields of wheat would shimmer in the sunshine and listen to the lonely women at the well, later would witness the wonder of the Jesus Christ as He walked the way of the Cross of Calvary.

### **Standing tall above the lentils**

Israel would witness the battle and the victory of the Godhead. Today we pray with assurance, "but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). When we read the Bible, we discover just the tip of the iceberg of God's authority and power. On to the final victory my dear friends, be constantly reliant on your blessed Redeemer and Lord. Stand tall in the fields of faith, stand your ground, look after your lentils and all they represent in your Christian life and witness.

### **Skilful defence of the field of faith**

Of course our knowledge of the Word of God is essential in this area of our lives. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Shammah was not ashamed when attacked by the destroying, ruthless Philistines. He stood his ground, he fought for his field in his day. Christian believers are encouraged stand their ground whilst under attack. "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you

the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:11-13).

### **Silence over the lentil patch**

So Shammah stood in the midst of the ground, defended it and slew the Philistines. Their fearful screaming threats had fallen silent. Shammah's bravery and skilful defence resulted in a silence falling across the field. He was the man who stood tall in the field of faith. Gradually through the silence the birdsong could be heard as the course of nature regained its powerful voice. The heavens declared the note of victory as it were.

### **Superb victory of the Lord of Glory**

"Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name" (1 Chronicles 29:11-13).

**Frank Rowley**

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Rev. Paddy Flynn was promoted to Glory from St. Gemma's Hospice on Monday 26 November 2012. Paddy, who served as chairman on the Executive Council of FEM, courageously faced his illness with a strong faith and trust in God. We pray that his wife Mary with other members of his family and friends will know the reality of the peace and grace of the risen Lord Jesus.

Below we include an extract from Paddy's thesis on the Atonement. The full document can be downloaded from:

<http://www.lwbc.co.uk/Pflynn/atonement.htm>

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Christ through His death on Calvary, His atoning work was perfected as He took our sins on Himself. By this He became the recognised founder of the new humanity and of which His people became members. The early church was no longer Jewish, no longer Gentile, but embracing and transcending both, described this new humanity. Those who are born into it will display the qualities and values of this new life. Giving of themselves instead of receiving, loving in service and bearing the cross of the one who died for them. It is

perhaps true to say the fullness of this new humanity may be some way off, yet as Christians we know the joy of this new life, sins forgiven, peace with God as members of His blood brought people. We are fully sure that the continuing work of Christ is still pressing on bringing many into this new life until the Bride is complete. James quotes in his letter on God in this connection "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures" (James 1:18). To put it simply, the people of Christ through Him have been created new through faith in Him and so have become the first fruits of the new humanity. The apostle Paul insists that believers in Christ are already justified in God's sight and often speaks of salvation as something, which lies in the future. "Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11). God showed His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath. The final judgment on all that is evil (Rom. 5:8-9). Christ's work will continue until He comes again, that great work of atonement, which began at the cross, will be totally and completely fulfilled on that glorious day. Paul says "I am sure that He who began a good work in you will bring to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6).

**Paddy Flynn**

F.E.M.



# JOY *to the* WORLD

*Wishing you many blessings  
this Christmas!!!*

*His Name  
is  
Wonderful!*